

National Dialogues on Coastal Stewardship



Why a National Dialogue?

Our coastal areas are invaluable for their economic vitality and remarkable biological diversity. Yet, because more than half the people in the U.S. now live and work within 50 miles of the coast, these areas are under tremendous pressure. Coastal habitats are being degraded and lost; harmful algae blooms are more numerous; fisheries are overexploited, and seafood consumption advisories have increased.

The "health" of the coast is imperiled, and many share responsibility for its care. To bring these stakeholders together, the National Ocean Service (NOS) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has invited partners from industry, environmental organizations, academic institutions, and other levels of government to participate in a series of "National Dialogues on Coastal Stewardship."

Tangible Outcomes of the National Dialogues

- Better understanding of problems and solutions
- New and stronger working partnerships
- Refinements in products and/or services to meet the needs of customers and stakeholders

National Dialogues: A Coastal Partnership

The National Dialogues bring together diverse partners to focus on the most important coastal and oceanic issues. They employ systematic approaches and interactive problem solving, and build partner-

What is coastal stewardship?

- Stewardship is the sum of ethics, behaviors and actions
- Every person and organization can be an environmental steward

ships and a sense of community between stakeholders. Through this dialogue, tangible outcomes can be achieved that may not be attainable in any other way.

Participants in the National Dialogues

The National Dialogues give people and groups who, in the past, were unable to address the future of oceans and coasts, a ready means to do so. This includes those who live, work and spend leisure time in coastal areas, as well as those who live "upstream" but understand that their actions can have a tremendous impact on coastal resources. Moreover, the process ensures that specific sectors—the scientific and academic, resource management, environmental protection, and industrial and development communities, for example—have the opportunity to get involved. The National Dialogues are overseen by the participating organizations.

The partners are responsible for selecting, planning and producing specific activities. They encourage individuals and groups to participate, and initiate supporting activities. Other national organizations are also encouraged to become partners in the National Dialogues.

National Dialogue Activities

Ocean Policy Dialogues. With 1998 deemed the Year of the Ocean, the National Dialogue partners encouraged dispassionate discussion of national ocean and coastal issues and policies. A roundtable in May 1998 compared and contrasted the major ocean policy issues facing the nation now with those of 30 years ago.

National Newsletter and Coastal Trends Workshop. A national newsletter was also initiated to encourage discussion and knowledge of ocean and coastal policy issues; more than 1,000 managers and practitioners now receive the *Ocean and Coastal Policy Network News*. On January 22, 1999, a national workshop will examine future trends that will affect U.S. national ocean and coastal policy for the next 25 years. For more information on these activities, contact Kathy Johnston, phone 302.831.8086; e-mail Johnston@udel.edu

National Dialogue Partners include:

- American Association of Port Authorities
- Boat Owners Association of the United States
- Center for Marine Conservation
- Coastal States Organization
- Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education
- Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
- National Fisheries Institute
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Coastal Futures 2025. Coastal Futures 2025 is a series of activities designed to develop visions for the use and the status of the nation's coastal areas by the year 2025. Participants from a wide variety of organizations, regions and backgrounds are developing these visions in keeping with four critical and interrelated dimensions of change: the quality of life and communities, economic vitality, environmental quality, and governance/management issues.

Improving our understanding of these dimensions of change is central to the challenge of balancing the uses of the coast with the conservation of coastal resources.

Activities of Coastal Futures 2025

- Futures Forums—open discussions led by futurists
- A stakeholder-led process to develop visions and strategies for implementation
- Extensive use of the World Wide Web to engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders
- A variety of events and products to heighten interest and participation.

The visions developed through Coastal Futures 2025 may have widespread implications. Efforts to inform the public about coastal conditions, and to encourage companies, organizations and individuals to be informed coastal stewards, will become ever more important. While this challenge is now well recognized, the task is enormous and continuous. Coastal Futures 2025 provides an opportunity to consider this emerging challenge and how to address it.

Objectives of Coastal Futures 2025

- Identify and describe the emerging challenges in coastal stewardship.
- Develop approaches that help the nation's coastal managers meet these challenges.
- Promote opportunities that help build the capacity of all coastal managers, decisionmakers, and users of the coast to be effective coastal stewards.

A shared vision will enrich our understanding of the importance of quality of life and community values. It will provide a point of reference to be consulted when economic and environmental interests need to be balanced. Coastal Futures 2025 provides an opportunity for coastal managers to integrate and respond to other policy and regulatory developments that bear on coastal management and that must be considered.

Continuing the Dialogue

The National Dialogues on Coastal Stewardship will be most successful if they are ongoing and evolve as a result of the participants' needs and interests. Wise coastal stewardship demands insights into (1) recognizing the most pressing problems impacting the nation's coastal resources; and (2) strong leadership in advancing the sustainable use of our coastal systems to support economic prosperity and environmental well-being. New approaches that bridge the gap between science, management and public policy, and that forge partnerships through integration, coordination and empowerment of all stakeholders, are likely to be the keys to long-term success.

For More Information

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By January 1999, reports and summaries of completed activities, and information about current and upcoming activities, will be available on the National Dialogue home page (currently under construction):

<http://state-of-coast.noaa.gov>

